

simple steps for raising healthy kids



Summer 2000

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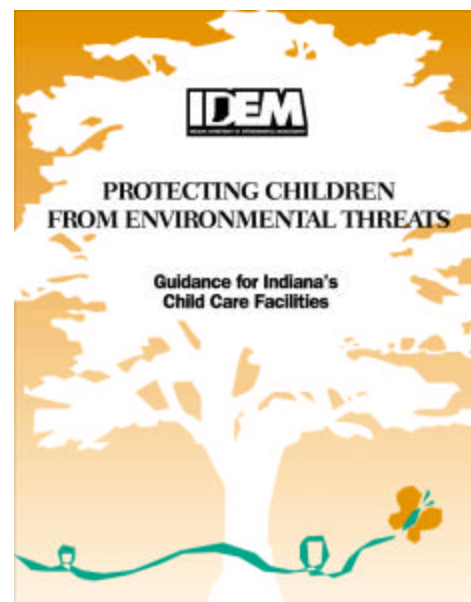
UV Index

A quick note.....

This newsletter will hopefully become regular occurrence for all child care facilities participating in the 5-Star Environmental Recognition Program. It will provide updates on environmental issues affecting children. We would also like to share any interesting stories or ideas you may have on protecting children from environmental health threats, recycling, and more. **Please feel free to use these articles in your own newsletters that go home with children. We encourage you to post this newsletter and the information provided in areas where parents will have access to them.** If you have any questions or comments about the information included in this newsletter, please contact Karen Teliha at 800-988-7901.

Free Guidance Manuals Now Available.....

If you have not yet received your copy of "Protecting Children from Environmental Threats: Guidance for Indiana's Child Care Facilities, please contact Karen Teliha at (800) 988-7901 for your complementary copy. This manual will provide you with easy-to-understand explanations and demonstrations of the environmental, health, and safety rules you must comply with, and provide guidance on how you can go beyond the rules to be an environmental steward in your community. The appendix contains coloring activities, a lesson plan on handwashing, and much more. Call for your free copy today!



Ozone Action Days

We hear a lot about depletion of the ozone layer in the stratosphere. This kind of ozone protects us from harmful ultraviolet radiation. Stratospheric ozone is good, but ground-level ozone is harmful. When people think of ground-level ozone, they usually picture a thick layer of smog over Los Angeles. They don't usually think of a Midwest summer day--hazy blue sky, sunny, and hot.

But people who live in cities are affected by a severe air pollution problem--ozone. It affects outlying suburbs and rural areas as well as the big cities.

Ozone Action Days will be called when weather forecasters predict days that are conducive to ozone formation. The area's industries and individual residents will be asked to voluntarily reduce emissions that cause ozone pollution. Although ozone cannot be seen or tasted it can irritate lungs and make breathing difficult. The urban haze that we call smog contains pollutants that react to form ozone.

Most of the pollutants that form ozone come from cars. Large factories account for another portion of the emissions. Small businesses such as printing plants, service stations, and auto body shops, and people using lawnmowers, paints, and cleaning solvents account for another portion of the emissions.

Ozone pollution is of particular concern to people with asthma and other respiratory problems because when it is breathed into the lungs, ozone reacts with lung tissue. It can harm breathing passages, making it more difficult for the lungs to work. It also can cause eye and throat irritation and cause a greater susceptibility to infection.



Ozone Health Facts

There is an association between ozone levels in the outdoor air and increased hospital admissions for respiratory causes, such as asthma. Ozone air pollution has been associated with as much as 10 to 20% of all summertime respiratory hospital visits and admissions. Children with respiratory problems are at greatest risk because of greater exposure to the outdoors during the summer months.

What can I do to protect myself and my children from ozone pollution?

Your local television and radio will notify you of ozone alerts. On days when Indiana calls an Ozone Action Day, asthmatics and other sensitive individuals should not exercise and should stay indoors in an air conditioned or well ventilated area. If you experience symptoms such as tightness in the chest, coughing, or wheezing, see your doctor immediately.

Top 10 Things You Can Do to Reduce Ozone

1. Instead of driving, share a ride, walk or bike.
2. Take public transportation
3. If you must drive, avoid excessive idling and jack-rabbit starts.
4. Don't refuel your car on ozone action days, or only do so after 7 p.m.
5. Avoid using outboard motors, off-road vehicles, or other gasoline powered recreational vehicles.
6. Defer mowing your lawn until late evening or the next day. Also avoid using gasoline-powered garden equipment.
7. Postpone chores that use oil-based paints, solvents, or varnishes that produce fumes.
8. If you are barbecuing, use an electric starter instead of charcoal lighter fluid.
9. Limit or postpone your household chores that will involve the use of consumer products.
10. Conserve energy in your home to reduce energy needs.

Provided by the Environmental Protection Agency

Clear your Child Care Facility of Asthma Triggers

Asthma is a serious lung disease. During an asthma attack, the airways get narrow, making it difficult to breathe. Symptoms of asthma include wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing. Asthma can even cause death. About 17 million Americans have asthma. Asthma is the leading cause of long-term illness in children. The air that children breathe can make a difference. Asthma may be triggered by allergens and irritants that are common in homes.

The following are five common asthma triggers that could be found in child care facilities and what you can do to reduce exposure to them. Not all of the asthma triggers listed here affect every person with asthma. Not all asthma triggers are listed here.

Secondhand Smoke

Asthma can be triggered by the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and the smoke breathed out by a smoker. Choose not to smoke in or around your child care facility and do not allow others to do so either.



Dust Mites

Dust mites are too small to be seen but are found in every child care facility. Dust mites live in mattresses, pillows, carpets, fabric-covered furniture, bedcovers, clothes, and stuffed



toys. Wash sheets and blankets once a week in hot water. Choose washable stuffed toys, wash them often in hot water, and dry thoroughly.

Pets

Your pet's skin flakes, urine, and saliva can be asthma triggers. Consider keeping pets outdoors or even finding a new home for your pets, if necessary.

Keep pets out of sleeping areas at all times, and keep the door closed. Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys.



Molds

Molds grow on damp materials. The key to mold control is moisture control. If mold is a problem in your child care facility, contact IDEM or your local Health Department to assess the type of mold and how to manage it. Lowering the moisture also helps reduce other triggers, such as dust mites and cockroaches. Wash mold off hard surfaces and dry completely. Absorbent materials, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, with mold may need to be replaced. Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water. Keep drip pans in your air conditioner, refrigerator, and dehumidifier clean and dry. Use exhaust fans or open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking, or using the dishwasher. Vent clothes dryers to the outside. Maintain low indoor humidity, ideally between 30-50% relative humidity. Humidity levels can be measured by hygrometers which are available at local hardware stores.

Pests

Droppings or body parts of pests such as cockroaches or rodents can be asthma triggers. Do not leave food or garbage out. Store food in airtight containers. Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids right away. If needed try using poison baits or traps first before using pesticide sprays.



Dust

Dust may contain asthma triggers. Remove dust often with a damp cloth, and vacuum carpet and fabric-covered furniture to reduce dust build-up. Do not vacuum when children are present. Using vacuums with high efficiency filters or central vacuums may be helpful.

Ozone

When your local weather forecast announces an ozone action day, stay indoors as much as possible.

Provided by the Environmental Protection Agency

Leave it on the Lawn

If you are removing the grass clippings from the lawn at your childcare facility or at home, you are removing many of the nutrients needed for a healthy lawn. This summer, please leave the grass clippings on the lawn.

Why you should Leave it on the Lawn

- **Benefits the environment by reducing the amount and frequency of fertilizer application.** Grass clippings are 80% water and contain 2-4% nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and other nutrients.
- **Improves you lawn.** Leaving grass clippings on the lawn returns nutrients to the soil resulting in healthier turf.
- **Saves time.** Since the grass is no longer bagged, fewer stops are required.
- **Reduces the amount of garbage you throw out.** Grass clippings can account for as much as 10% of the garbage we produce.

How to Leave it on the Lawn

Allow your grass to grow to three inches and then cut no more than one inch off the top. This is the “one-third” rule. This helps develop a deeper root system which is a natural defense against weeds, disease, and drought.

During fast growing periods, you may have to cut the grass every four to seven days.

Common Questions

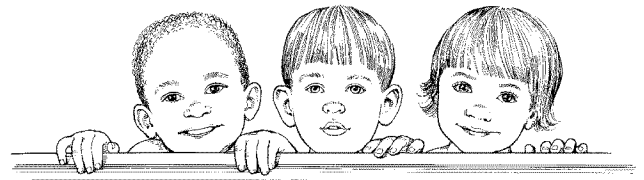
1. Isn't it more work to mow the lawn often enough to keep the clippings short?
No. Cutting grass before it is overgrown is easier and faster. Eliminating the time and effort it takes to bag clippings further shortens the mowing time.
2. What if my lawn grows too high between mowings to leave the clippings?
You have several options. You may mow over the clippings to further shred and scatter them. You may raise the mower height so only the top third of the grass blade is removed and then gradually lower the mower height over the span of several mowings.
3. Do I need a mulching mower?
No. Mulching blades and adaptor kits are available for many types of lawn mowers. When it is time to replace your mower, consider purchasing an electric mulching mower.
4. Do grass clippings cause thatch?
No. Thatch is an accumulation of the “woody” parts of the grass plant: stems, roots, and stolons, not the clippings. Thatch is most often caused by over watering and over fertilizing.

Provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Recycled Ideas

Recycled animals

Divide the children into groups and give each group a cardboard box. Get out leftover craft supplies, lots of glue and tape. Each group is responsible for making an animal out of their box. After the animals are finished have a judge give out ribbons to each group such as, “most creative” or “most realistic” (submitted by Rebecca Cross, intern for the children's health initiative, summer 2000)



Mosaics

This works better with slightly older children. Have the children paint packing peanuts or other non-biodegradable material different colors. Let them dry. Give the children large pieces of butcher paper and have them draw the outline of a picture. Using glue and the colored packing peanuts, fill in the picture. (submitted by Rebecca Cross, intern for the children's health initiative, summer 2000)

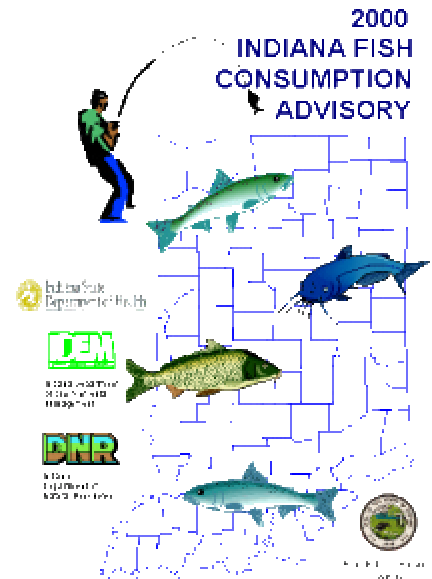
Indiana's Fish Consumption Advisory

Fish are an important part of a healthy diet. However, some fish caught for sport or subsistence may contain chemicals that could pose health risks if eaten too often. Pollutants, such as PCBs and mercury that accumulate (bioaccumulate) in increasing amounts in the tissues of fish, birds, animals, and humans, are of great concern because of the potential for high exposures. Eating fish containing certain chemical pollutants may cause birth defects, liver damage, cancer, and other serious health problems. These pollutants may pose special risks to a developing fetus, nursing infants, and young child when they or their mothers eat contaminated fish.

Don't stop eating fish. It is a good source of protein that is low in saturated fat. You can maximize the benefits and minimize the risk of eating contaminated fish by following the 2000 Indiana Fish Advisory to help you make informed choices about:

- ❖ what types of fish you eat,
- ❖ where you fish,
- ❖ how you prepare fish for cooking
- ❖ how to moderate the amount and frequency of fish you consume.

Long-lasting contaminants such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), DDT, and mercury build up in your body over time. It may take months or years of regularly eating contaminated fish to build up amounts which are a health concern. Health problems which may result from the contaminants found in fish range from small changes in health that are hard to detect, to birth defects and cancer. Mothers who eat highly-contaminated fish for many years before becoming pregnant may have children who are slower to develop and learn. The meal advice in the Fish Advisory is intended to protect children from those potential developmental problems. Adults are less likely to have health problems at the low levels that affect children.



How to Reduce Your Health Risk

BE SELECTIVE. Be picky about the types and size of fish you eat. Fish taken from some waters are not recommended for consumption.

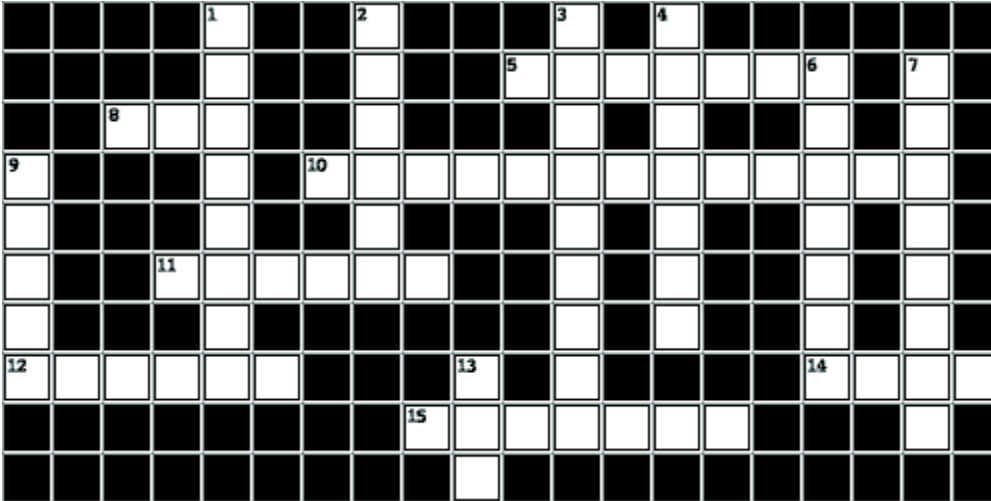
KEEP THE SMALL FISH. Throw back the larger fish and keep the small ones for dinner. Small fish taste better and are less contaminated than older, larger fish. Many popular fish such as bass, trout, salmon, and catfish must exceed a specific minimum size to keep. Also, it is illegal to sort and release a fish taken previously in the day with another fish. Please consult the State Fishing Guide.

EAT LESS CONTAMINATED FISH. Check the fish advisory for those with Group 5 advisories. Substitute fish taken from the Group 3 or higher categories for those in lower categories.

EAT SMALLER MEALS. When you eat large fish, eat small servings. Freeze the rest and use it over time.

CLEAN/COOK FISH PROPERLY. A substantial amount of fat is located near the skin of the fish, and because of this, a boneless, skinless fillet should be prepared for cooking. The boneless, skinless fillet with the fat layer along the belly flap and the midpoint of the back removed will limit the amount of fat consumed (see How to Prepare Fish). Broiling, baking, or grilling fish so that the fat drips away reduces PCB and dioxin levels. Mercury is bound to the meat of the fish, and these precautions will not reduce the amount in a meal of fish.

Test Your UV Knowledge



Words:
 Immune
 Glasses
 UV Index
 Sunlamp
 Chlorine
 Sunscreen
 Tiny
 UVB
 Sunwise
 School
 Eighty
 Cataract
 Cancer
 Ozone
 Protect
 Hat

Across

- 5 An electric light that mimics the sun's harmful rays
 8 With a wide brim, it protects your face, neck, and ears
 10 EPA's program to help teach kids about sun safety
 11 Skin ____: One of the worst health effects of too much sun
 12 People get ____% of their sun exposure by age 18
 14 Only amount of sun exposure that's safe
 15 Daily forecast of UV exposure

Down

- 1 Clouding of the eye's lens
 2 After too much UV, this system can't fight off disease as well
 3 With SPF of 15 or more, protects skin against the sun
 4 Sun____: Shades for your eyes
 6 Sunglasses, sunscreen, and hats do it
 7 Chemical in CFCs that destroys ozone
 9 Layer that protects the Earth from the Sun's UVB
 13 Type of UV that's especially harmful

What is the UV Index?

Overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause immediate effects such as sunburn and long-term problems such as skin cancer and cataracts. The Ultraviolet (UV) Index provides important information to help you plan your outdoor activities to prevent overexposure to the sun's rays.

The UV Index provides a daily forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to the sun. The Index predicts UV intensity levels on a scale of 0 to 10+, where 0 indicates a minimal risk of overexposure and 10+ means a very high risk. Calculated on a next-day basis for dozens of cities across the United States, the UV Index takes into account clouds and other local conditions that affect the amount of UV radiation reaching the ground in different parts of the country.

Ultraviolet radiation and less protective ozone has caused an alarming rise in skin cancers, an 1800% increase since 1930.

By taking a few simple precautions, you can greatly reduce your risk of sun-related illnesses.

- ✓ Limit your time in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ✓ Whenever possible, seek shade.
- ✓ Use a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15
- ✓ Wear a wide-brimmed hat and if possible, tightly woven, full-length clothing.
- ✓ Wear UV-protective sunglasses and watch for the UV Index daily.
- ✓ Avoid sunlamps and tanning salons.

While you should always take precautions against overexposure to the sun, please take special care to adopt the safeguards when the UV Index predicts levels of moderate or above. Watch for UV Index reports in your local newspapers and on television.

Provided by the Environmental Protection Agency